

VZCZCXRO2993
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHNT #0464 0680514
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 090514Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5308
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY PRIORITY 7687
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 1793
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 2317
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY 2210

UNCLAS TASHKENT 000464

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [ECON](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: GOU'S EMINENT DOMAIN PLACES AMCITS OUT ON THE STREET

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY.

¶1. (SBU) On March 2, the Amcit owners of a local business, American Optical, were served an eviction notice by the Tashkent City Hokimiyat giving them two days to vacate the premises before the building was demolished. The one-story building was shared by two other shops, both of which had closed down after receiving similar eviction notices. The Amcit owners told Poloff they learned through the Hokimiyat that demolition of this and several other buildings in the area was part of the Hokim's master plan to change the city. The Tashkent City Hokim, Abdukahhor Tukhtaev, had agreed to meet with building owners on the evening of March 2. However, he did not appear at the meeting.

¶2. (SBU) On March 3, the Amcit owners packed up their store and left. Demolition of their building, together with several other stores, restaurants, and apartments, has commenced. Poloff observed a well-orchestrated effort by scores of construction workers, heavy equipment, and dozens of MVD officers providing security. The Amcits told Poloff they believe they will be compensated for the loss of their store only in the form of a small apartment in the suburbs.

¶3. (SBU) On February 14, Tukhtaev paid a visit to American Optical and gave them two hours to remove their exterior sign with the store's name on it. The owners told Poloff the problem occurred because their business was located on President Karimov's route to work. Following the visit, the owners changed the name of the store to Tashkent Optical.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The purchase of the store was financed by several Korean Baptist churches in the U.S.; however, American Optical had no formal ties to any religious group and had operated in Tashkent for the last seven years without any problems from the GOU. However, this incident serves as yet another example of the precarious environment in which small and medium sized business must operate in Uzbekistan.
PURNELL